

*Charles Henry Wilcken.*  
*Deseret News, April 10, 1915.*

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## Charles Henry Wilcken, an Undervalued Saint

BY WILLIAM C. SEIFRIT

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CHARLES HENRY WILCKEN WAS BORN IN ECHORST, a small village in Holstein, Germany, on October 5, 1830.<sup>1</sup> Apprenticed to a miller whose trade he apparently mastered, he later distinguished himself as a soldier in a battle with Danish forces over control of the Schleswig-Holstein provinces and was decorated with the Iron Cross by the Prus-

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<sup>1</sup>Much of the biographic information concerning Wilcken was extracted from unpublished MSS prepared by descendants, including Amy Wilcken Pratt Romney, "Stories from the Life of Charles Henry Wilcken"; "History of Caroline Christine Eliza Reiche Wilcken"; and "Sketch of Dora W. Pratt" all in the Utah State Historical Society Library, Salt Lake City. These accounts, based as they presumably are on family oral tradition, contain factual errors discovered by recent research. Wilcken himself provided some background information in his later years. See "Eighteen Hundred Fifty-seven," *Young Woman's Journal* 18 (1907): 393-97, 495-96. Additional information was obtained from his obituary in the *Deseret Evening News*, April 10, 1915, and from Wilcken Family Group Records, LDS Genealogical Library, Salt Lake City.

*Cover illustration for an 1882 publication making fun of Oscar Wilde's pretensions. It sold for ten cents and was distributed on trains.*



## In this issue

"There is a history in all men's lives," Shakespeare tells us. And so there is, whether the person be famous or largely forgotten like Charles H. Wilcken and Frederick Vining Fisher, subjects of the first and last articles in this issue. Battle hero, deserter, convert to Mormonism, and factotum to LDS church leaders, Wilcken represents the legions of community builders without whom little would be accomplished. Fisher, a Methodist minister in Ogden, defended the Mormons in the national press, introduced Utahns to the great Chautauqua educational movement, and promoted the state's scenic attractions.

Between these forgotten figures readers will get glimpses of more famous personalities: poet Oscar Wilde whose 1882 American lecture tour promoted aesthetic values; boxer Jack Dempsey, seen through the eyes of an admiring boy; promoter Tex Rickard who ushered in a new era in sports with the \$100,000 Jeffries-Johnson fight and the Dempsey-Willard championship bout; and, finally, an array of professional wrestlers who appeared on the Friday night cards at the Fairgrounds Coliseum. This juxtaposition of the famous and the forgotten offers readers so inclined considerable grist for philosophical reflection.



*Charles H. Wilcken in his Prussian uniform. Photograph of a painting in the Deseret News, December 21, 1912.*

sian King, Frederick William IV. Wilcken's military prowess was also noticed by the Danish king, Frederick VII, who let it be known that he wished to conscript the hero. But young Wilcken apparently had other ideas. After consulting with family and friends and collecting whatever cash was available, he left Echorst for South America to try to find an older brother who had emigrated several years earlier. In Liverpool he somehow managed to board the wrong ship and found himself, several weeks later, in New York.

Running short of cash and possibly suffering from a physical ailment, Wilcken listened to the pitch of a recruiting officer who was enlisting men to go to the western desert to put down a tribe of rebellious "Indians" called Mormons.<sup>2</sup> Upon his enlistment he was sent to Fort Leavenworth for training and ultimately assigned to Capt. John Wolcott Phelps of the Fourth Artillery Battalion that became part of Johnston's Army.

Marching westward with the army in the summer and fall of 1857, Wilcken, in the early days of his twenty-seventh year, made a momentous decision, faced a close brush with death, and changed his life for-

<sup>2</sup>The enlistment record described Wilcken as six feet one inch in height, with grey eyes, brown hair, and fair complexion. *Registers of Enlistments* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1956), vols. 51-52, microfilm roll no. 25, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City.

ever. During the afternoon of October 7, 1857, he deserted and headed west. Within a few days he was captured by one of the Mormon defenders, Jonathan Ellis Layne, who had been out rabbit hunting. As Layne described it:

Just then I heard a slight noise at my right hand. I did not turn my head, but drew my gun around toward the noise and there stood a large soldier. [I] dropped the muzzle of my gun and pointed it directly at his heart, he threw up his hands and said "Don't shoot, I am unarmed." I told him to come up to me still holding my gun pointing at him, and he surrendered himself to me.

Layne confirmed the absence of weapons and then

. . . with the big soldier went to the camp. While going he offered to exchange clothing with me as he was afraid if he was caught with the soldiers clothing on he would certainly be shot. I did not wish to swap with him, but when we came to the camp he soon got rid of his soldiers clothing. I turned the prisoner over to Porter Rockwell. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Layne gave half of his cooked rabbit to Wilcken.

Several days later Wilcken arrived in Salt Lake City, accompanied by several sick Mormons and some one hundred fifty cattle that the Mormons had liberated from the army's stock herds. His presence was noted by a number of persons, including Hosea Stout:

The deserter a long slab sided Dutchman reports that many of the soldiers would desert if they believed they would be well treated here, also that they were dissatisfied with their officers and that the officers were divided in their councils what to do.<sup>4</sup>

Unaware that an enduring friendship with this man would develop some years later, Wilford Woodruff also noted Wilcken's presence:

The Brethren Came in from the East & brought in 153 head of Cattle. 3 teamsters & one deserter from the Army helped drive them in. The deserter reported that Neither Johnson nor Harney nor the Governor or Judges or any of the Territorial Officers had arrived at the Army neither any females. He said the soldiers were only allowed 3 buiscuit 2 Cups of Coffee & a small piece of Beef per day that they were not half fed. They had 75 waggons burned & the Contents of 76. 2 waggons saved.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Jonathan Ellis Layne Journal (undated, after the fact account inserted in the Journal History [LDS Church Library-Archives] after December 7, 1857). The journal entries of other Mormon defenders for October 7 and 9 confirm the presence of the "large soldier" in camp. See for example the journals of Andrew Jackson Allen, Henry Ballard, and Newton Tuttle in the Utah State Historical Society Library.

<sup>4</sup>*On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*, ed. Juanita Brooks, 2 vols., (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964): 2:641.

<sup>5</sup>Wilford Woodruff, *Journal*, ed. Scott Kenney (Midvale, Ut.: Signature Books, 1985), 5:107. This entry is repeated almost verbatim in the Journal History of the same date.

Wilcken's arrival brought the Mormons more hard information than they had had for some time. In addition to the severe conditions of the soldiers recorded by Woodruff, Hosea Stout noted something of the army's capability: "The deserter who passed yester laughed with the joy that he had the privilege of passing here in peace for he said we could destory the enemies' whole army here in a short time."<sup>6</sup>

Placed in the care of Provo Bishop Elias Hicks Blackburn, Wilcken must have found his new environment congenial, for he was baptized into the Mormon faith in December 1857. Then, for more than two years he effectively dropped from sight. From the winter of 1857-58 to 1860 or 1861 he may well have been living in Heber Valley, probably in or near Center Creek. He had assisted R. T. Burton in organizing a militia unit in Heber, operated a grist mill, assisted in planning a July 4 celebration in Heber, and served as adjutant in the county militia commanded by Maj. John W. Witt.<sup>7</sup>

Thoroughly at home in his adopted land and religion, Wilcken was formally called to fill a mission for the church in 1869 but was delayed in fulfilling that assignment. One reason for the delay is obvious: he had deserted from the U.S. Army, and traveling across the country may have been a most unattractive prospect. Traveling to Germany, especially northern Germany near Denmark, may have been equally unattractive. Whatever the reason, his mission was delayed for nearly two years until after a curious document—believable if not precisely true—was written, signed, and attested to in Fillmore, Utah, on March 2, 1871:

I hereby certify that in the year 1857 I held a Commission of Colonel of the militia of the Territory of Utah, and in the fall of that year in the month of October was with said detachment in the vicinity of Ham's Fork in Said Territory, and that said detachment did there at that time arrest and take prisoner one Charles Wilkin a German (who was then a soldier in the U.S. Army in the command of Gen A. S. Johnson) and convey him to the Mormon Camp at Echo Kanyon and there delivered him up to the Officer in Command at that place to be by him forwarded on to Salt Lake City.

The document was signed by Thomas Callister and attested to by Hiram B. Clawson. Two months later to the day Wilcken left Salt Lake

<sup>6</sup>*On the Mormon Frontier*, 2:642.

<sup>7</sup>Wilcken, "Eighteen Hundred," pp. 393-94; Elias Hicks Blackburn, Journals and "A Summary Sketch," Utah State Historical Society Library; Wilcken Family Group Records; John Crook, Journal, 1:41, 42, and William Lindsay, Autobiography, p. 16, both in Special Collections, Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo; Journal History, July 4, 1865; *How Beautiful upon the Mountains*, ed. William James Mortimer (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1963), p. 109.

City for New York where, on May 10, 1871, he and a company of Saints left for Europe on the ship *Liverpool*.<sup>8</sup>

After spending the summer in England, Wilcken "was assigned to labor as a traveling Elder in the Swiss and German mission under the direction of Bro. [Eduard] Schoenfeld" with whom he and Johannes Huber co-authored a forty-six-page pamphlet titled *Der Mormonismus* (Bern, 1872). By the spring of 1873 Wilcken was back in England serving as president of the Birmingham mission. He was released from that office on June 3, 1873, and left the following day for Utah in charge of a company of 246 Saints on board the *Nevada*. Among the passengers were his brother August, his widowed mother Annie, and three nieces—Wilhelmine, Emily, and Christine Damke—orphaned daughters of his older sister Anna Catharina Christine Damke. Wilcken and his relatives arrived in Salt Lake City on June 26, 1873.<sup>9</sup>

He labored as a home missionary and earned a modest living working in the ZCMI produce department until November 1873 when he was engaged to operate "the lower B. Y. mill, on Canyon Creek [later called Liberty Park]." His family was nearly burned out within a week or so of moving to the mill and farm, but Wilcken persevered and by the end of the year his white flour was being praised in the local press.<sup>10</sup>

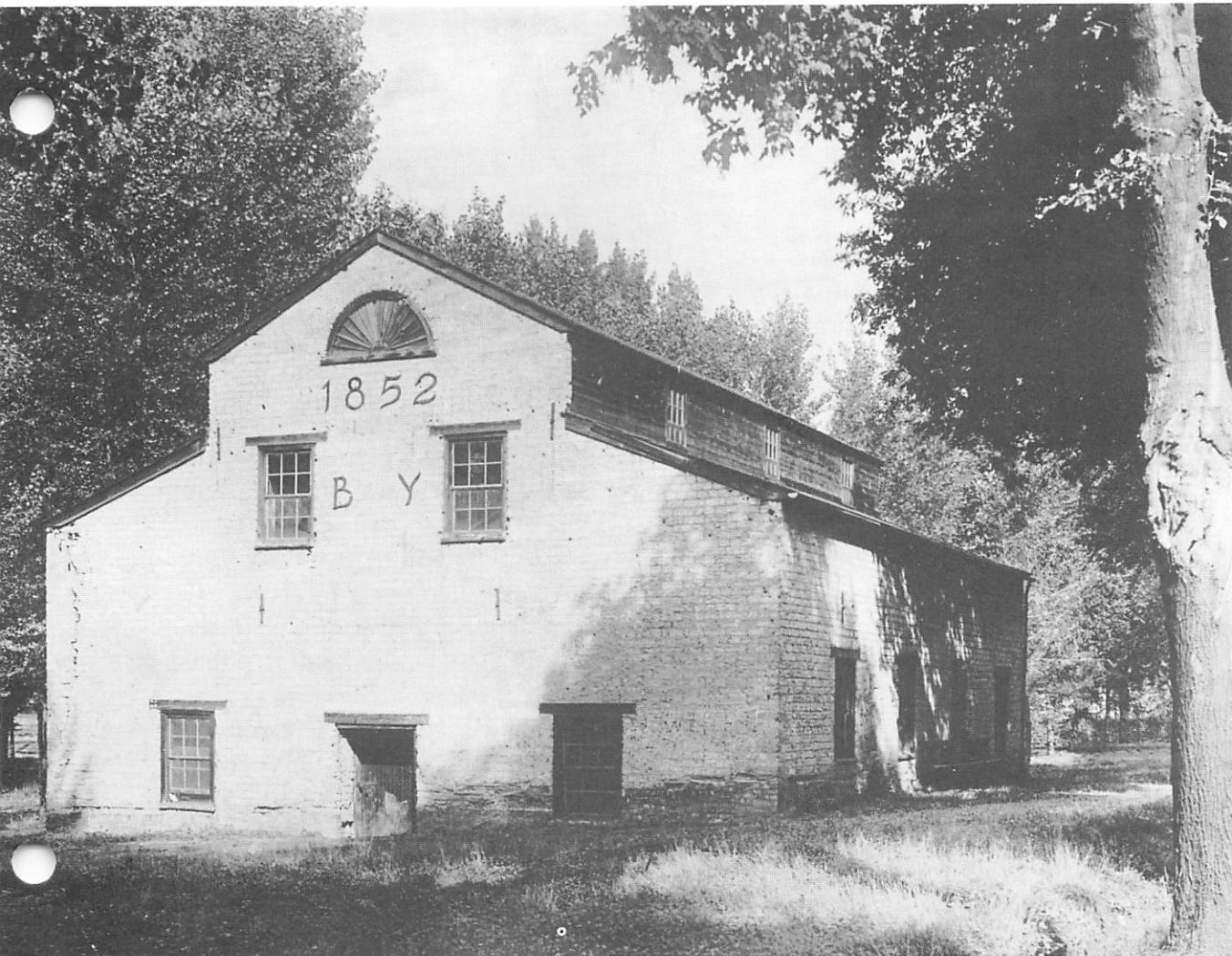
During the next several years Wilcken established many connections in the community and took on additional responsibilities as a kind of knight errant for the First Presidency of the LDS church and for Wilford Woodruff of the Quorum of the Twelve. His duties for church officials included driving them and/or their wives to various functions. For example, he drove Elizabeth, a wife of Brigham Young, Jr., to the St. George Temple for the dedicatory ceremonies there in December 1876; he spoke for twenty minutes in the temple on Christmas Eve and later went quail hunting with Brigham Young, Jr., and Wilford Woodruff. In August 1879 he accompanied "Prest [John] Taylor . . . A. M. Cannon, . . . R. T. Burton, & Jas Jack . . . to the Penitentiary to see Elder Geo. Q. Cannon at his request. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup>*Deseret Evening News*, April 7, 1869; Military Records, Utah Militia, Utah State Archives; Journal History, May 22, 1871.

<sup>9</sup>Journal History, September 21, 1871; *Deseret Evening News*, October 10, 1871, June 26, 1873.

<sup>10</sup>*Deseret Evening News*, November 3, 12, December 31, 1873. Wilcken was severely injured on the farm in 1878 when he was tossed by a bull owned by John W. Young. He suffered lacerations and bruises on his head and face that took several months to heal. See *ibid.*, August 13 and December 9, 1878.

<sup>11</sup>Woodruff, *Journal*, 7:296, 297; L. John Nuttall, *Journal*, August 27, 1879, Special Collections, Lee Library.



*Isaac Chase mill in Liberty Park was later owned by Brigham Young. USHS collections.*

By early 1879 Wilcken had begun his first term as Salt Lake City watermaster and was active in developing and maintaining the water system for an ever-increasing population. He helped plan for a canal from Parley's Creek in what is now Sugar House to the North or Dry Bench, and he saved the Salt Lake and Jordan Canal from sustaining serious damage by riding out to determine the cause of a sudden drop in the water level. After locating a blockage on the dam he enlisted several neighbors to assist with repairs and thereby insured an uninterrupted flow of water. Following the municipal election of 1884, Wilcken found himself without regular employment. The church newspaper took editorial notice of his absence from city service:

We see no position awarded to the late Watermaster Mr. Chas H. Wilcken, but suppose that our City Fathers will find a post for him, so that his valuable services will not be lost. . . . He is a brave and reliable public officer, and we shall look for his appointment to some position of honor and trust within the gift of the municipality.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>*Deseret Evening News*, March 28, 1879; June 13, July 16, August 1, 1883; March 19, 1884.

The *Deseret News* had reason to cite Wilcken's bravery. In August 1883 he had been one of the principals in a most tragic incident. Marshal Andrew Burt and "Special Police Officer" Wilcken had been summoned to subdue and take into custody a violent man, drunk, who was causing a disturbance and threatening citizens with a gun. During the fray Burt was shot and killed and Wilcken suffered a serious gunshot wound but nevertheless managed to subdue the gunman. He was unable, however, to prevent a mob from taking the prisoner from jail and lynching him.<sup>13</sup>

By May 1884 Wilcken was on regular duty with the Salt Lake City Police Department. In that capacity he was called upon to arrest two drunken Idaho politicians who had been causing a disturbance in the Salt Lake Theatre. Wilcken and several others were sued by the political figures for defamation of character, among other things, but Wilcken's attorney successfully pled that he had simply been performing his lawfully prescribed duties and was therefore immune from suit.<sup>14</sup>

Wilcken continued to protect the weal of the community, both public and Saintry. In January 1885 he, L. John Nuttall, H. C. Barrell, and President John Taylor took the Mormon church "underground" as the federal campaign against the church entered its most intense phase. This began one of the most exciting periods in his life. The duties he performed, the risks he took, and the success of his efforts are proof of his devotion and loyalty to his church and its leaders.

During the period John Taylor was in hiding it was Charles Wilcken who ran the mail between the safe house, or "Do" as it was called, and Salt Lake City, arranged transportation for other General Authorities who had business with each other and with Taylor, and stood guard while they met. In fact, Wilcken lived on the underground with Taylor during the last two years of his life, commuting as necessary between the "Do" and Salt Lake City or elsewhere when not actually on duty. Most days he would make a trip to Salt Lake with the day's communications and return between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. When Taylor died in July 1887 Wilcken took his son Joseph E. Taylor, in the middle of the night, to his father's body.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., August 25, September 4, 15, 1883; Abraham H. Cannon, Journal (hereafter AHC Journal), August 25, 1883, Utah State Historical Society Library.

<sup>14</sup>Herbert L. Gleason, "The Salt Lake City Police Department, 1851-1949: A Social History" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1950), p. 61; *Deseret Evening News*, December 24, 1884, January 14, 1885.

<sup>15</sup>Samuel Bateman, Diary, September 1, 1886, through July 27, 1887, *passim*, Special Collections, Lee Library; Nuttall, Journal, July 25, 1887.



With President Taylor dead, Wilcken's services were even more in demand. For example, he confirmed to Abraham H. Cannon that rumors of a new "cohab" case against him were true and offered to keep him apprised of the case's developments. He was much concerned with the safety of church leaders and on one occasion drove George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith from the Cannon farm to the tithing office yard under a load of hay and farm implements. The two men then slipped into the Lion House without being seen. Another time, Wilford Woodruff was hidden by Wilcken in his own home one night. Indeed, Wilcken was responsible for securing Woodruff's safety on several occasions. This account is typical:

President Woodruff, at half past 9 o'clock a.m., had an interview with Marshal Dyer. Dyer stated to him in their conversation that he had no papers whatever against President Woodruff, but after Dyer left he [Woodruff] began to think that maybe it was a trap, and so did Bro Cannon and J. F. Smith and B. Young [Jr.], so C. H. W. [Wilcken] went and got our team and took them away, and in about a half hour after they had gone, Deputy [Bowman] Cannon came to the office to subpoena President Woodruff and to search for the other brethren. . . . [I] found C. H. W. and he told me President Woodruff was at his farm. [I] took him some medicine and 2 letters that C. H. W. had given me.<sup>16</sup>

Over the years Wilcken developed especially strong ties to the Cannon families and to Wilford Woodruff. His closeness to the Cannons is no better illustrated than by this entry from Abraham H. Cannon's journal: "Father started today in company with Chas. Wilcken for Logan; he went by team and will there meet Aunt Carlie and her children. The latter will be adopted to him as will Chas. Wilcken." Wilcken's "adoption" by George Q. Cannon was more than a formality; it acknowledged a caring relationship. In early May 1888 when Abraham's daughter Emma died after a lengthy illness, Wilcken took the bereaved father for several rides to help him deal with his grief, offered the closing prayer at Emma's funeral, and later visited Abraham in company with George Q. Cannon and anointed Abraham.<sup>17</sup>

On Saturday, September 15, 1888, Wilcken performed yet another service for the Cannons; he and H. B. Clawson testified *against* George Q. Cannon before a grand jury as part of a previously arranged plea bargain. Then, on the following Monday, Wilcken and Cannon's

<sup>16</sup>AHC Journal, July 31, 1887; Bateman, Diary, August 2, 1887; Woodruff, *Journal*, 8:452; Bateman, Diary, October 15, 1887.

<sup>17</sup>AHC Journal, March 14, May 2-4, 1888.



*George Q. Cannon, seated on chair, with other imprisoned polygamists and warden Dow at the territorial penitentiary in Sugar House. Charles H. Wilcken transported Cannon to and from the prison to serve his term—one of many duties he performed for LDS church leaders. USHS collections.*

attorneys accompanied George Q. as he surrendered to Marshal Dyer. Later that day Wilcken drove Cannon to the penitentiary and made a second trip with additional bedding. While George Q. was in the penitentiary Wilcken visited him almost daily. A typical entry in Cannon's prison diary reads: "Brother C. H. Wilcken brought out a wagon load of my children today . . . William also came out and brought with him Emma Wilcken, a daughter of Bro. C. H. Wilcken." Typically, when Cannon was released from prison, it was Wilcken who drove him away to Wilford Woodruff's home.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., September 15 and 17, 1888; M. Hamblin Cannon, ed., "The Prison Diary of a Mormon Apostle," *Pacific Historical Review* 16 (1947): 395, 396; 403; Woodruff, *Journal*, 9:8.

Early in 1889 new charges of polygamy and/or cohabitation were pushed by federal officials against church leaders, especially George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith. Wilcken took that message to L. John Nuttall who communicated it to Smith. Smith agreed that Wilcken should look out for the Smith families, and Charles made appropriate preparations.<sup>19</sup>

Wilcken's life was not all hiding families, midnight messages and meetings, or confidential warnings; he enjoyed pleasant, sociable experiences as well. In April 1889 he accompanied Wilford and Emma Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, H. B. Clawson, and daughter Mamie on a pleasure trip to California. They stayed initially at the Grand Hotel in San Francisco and then journeyed to Del Monte and visited geysers near Cloverdale. At the latter tourist attraction Wilford Woodruff needed some assistance: "I leaned upon the arm of Brother Wilcken who aided me greatly by assisting me up the mountain. It gave Brother Wilcken a good sweating to do so." Wilcken was fifty-seven years old at the time and Woodruff was eighty-two.<sup>20</sup>

By 1890 Wilcken was spending more and more time with Wilford Woodruff, a relationship that was probably based more on collegiality and companionship than on the necessity for a bodyguard. He began accompanying Woodruff on many of the church president's trips. For example, he joined Woodruff on a journey through Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico, occasionally speaking at meetings along the way. That same year, Woodruff "attended the Dedication of Charles H. Wilcken House & took supper. We had beautiful Music & Singing."<sup>21</sup>

Despite his growing closeness to Woodruff, Wilcken did not neglect his other friends, especially the Cannons. At the request of Abraham H. Cannon, he confirmed a rumor that Marshal Doyle had obtained a warrant for Abraham's arrest, but Wilcken "bought Doyle off, and got his promise that . . . [Cannon] should not be molested, nor should any other person without sufficient notice being given for them to escape and to get witnesses out of the way." Doyle apparently gave Wilcken the names of fifty-one persons about to be arrested in Utah and Emery counties, and a messenger was dispatched to warn them. "Thus," Cannon wrote, "with a little money a channel of com-

<sup>19</sup>Nuttall, *Journal*, January 31, February 1, 1889.

<sup>20</sup>Woodruff, *Journal*, 9:79.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 9:105-9 and 79.

munication is kept open between the government offices and the suffering and persecuted Church members."<sup>22</sup>

Two years later, in October 1891, Wilcken again had occasion to warn Abraham Cannon of his impending arrest on new cohabitation charges. In fact, the grand jury had quizzed Deputy Marshal Bowman Cannon closely as to why Abraham had not been arrested. Bowman had been a member of several search parties that were unsuccessful in capturing polygamists and/or witnesses, and there is circumstantial evidence that Bowman and perhaps another may have been on a Mormon payroll. That, together with Wilcken's ties to the law enforcement community, may help explain why so many polygamists escaped capture. As an aside, it should be noted that Bowman Cannon was not related to the George Q., Angus M., or David H. Cannon families, but he did have a Mormon connection. He was the son of Marsena Cannon, the pioneer photographer, who with his entire family was excommunicated in October 1874.<sup>23</sup>

Wilcken became adept at hand holding during the period of the raid. L. John Nuttall, for example, had been toying with the idea of giving himself up to the court on anticipated charges of unlawful cohabitation. Wilcken traveled to Provo where Nuttall was in hiding to have a long talk with him and to bring the message from George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith that he "must not do it at present." A few months later, in February 1891, circumstances had changed, and Nuttall was still anxious to break his exile. He talked with H. B. Clawson and Wilcken about it, and the latter told him

. . . there would be no difficulty in my coming out; and if anything was said about me, he would know of it and I would not be interfered with, that he would guarantee my safety, everything having been satisfactorily arranged.

Wilcken's relationship with Nuttall was not limited to the latter's fear of imprisonment. A few days after the above conversation was recorded, Nuttall became suspicious that his daughter Eleanor had been out all night with "an outsider." Nuttall sent for Wilcken and "put him on the hunt for her or the man we supposed she had gone with. . . ." The errand was probably fruitless, for Eleanor apologized

<sup>22</sup>AHC Journal, October 18, 1889.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., September 20, 1888; *Deseret Evening News*, October 15, 1874. The Cannon entry details one occasion of his receiving inside information that his father's farm was about to be raided. Deputy Edward A. Franks, according to Cannon, complained that news of the imminent raid "must have leaked from the Grand Jury room." Cannon then went on to say, "The fact is he himself, being under pay from our people, keeps certain ones informed of all that goes on at Marshal Dyer's office."

almost immediately for having stayed at the home of a married sister without having informed her parents.<sup>24</sup>

Through his entire life in Utah Wilcken was willing to do what he could for his church and its leaders. A German named Joseph Walter Dietrich had been befriended, possibly by Wilcken but certainly by the First Presidency. He had been given financial support and encouragement in his efforts to publish a German-language newspaper. Then, he apparently turned on his benefactors and became virulently anti-Mormon in his newspaper. It became Wilcken's duty to close up the publication and advise Dietrich that his attitude and actions no longer enjoyed church support. Sometimes his counseling was less radical. In September and October 1891 he and L. John Nuttall visited Beck's Hot Springs in an effort to talk the manager, Lehi Pratt, out of his abuse of alcohol.<sup>25</sup>

In July 1889 Wilcken had entered upon what was probably the most ambitious business project of his life. With the backing of Mormon church leaders, a number of men organized the Deseret and Salt Lake Agricultural and Manufacturing Company. Wilcken was elected one of the trustees. Other principals included the First Presidency, John Q. and Abraham H. Cannon, B. Y. Hampton, and others. Their plan was to build a dam on the Sevier River to provide irrigation water for thousands of acres of land in Sevier County. As the 1890s opened Wilcken became increasingly involved in trying to make a success of the company, but it was tough going. He made frequent trips to Deseret to inspect the dam-building progress, survey town and home sites, and occasionally speak to groups of Saints in the area. By January 1892 the company directors were preparing to sell off some of the assets of the company to relieve their debt load, and because of an administrative mix-up the company was in danger of losing its water rights on the Sevier River. Following a reorganization during the winter of 1891-92, Wilcken had been made vice-president and given the responsibility of securing uncontested water rights and settling all the company's debts. Despite his efforts the project would ultimately be plagued with problems severe enough to thwart its complete fruition. His involvement with the company continued until March 25, 1903, when he resigned.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Nuttall, *Journal*, February 11, July 3, 6, 1891.

<sup>25</sup>AHC *Journal*, August 1, 1890; Nuttall, *Journal*, September 28, October 8, 1891.

<sup>26</sup>Nuttall, *Journal*, July 1, 1889, October 22, 1891, March 25, 1903; AHC *Journal*, July 1, 1889, January 30, February 5, 1892.

As if the trouble-ridden canal company were not enough for a sixty-year-old church coachman, bodyguard, and policeman, Wilcken found himself involved in May 1892 in the construction of the Saltair Railroad. He and L. John Nuttall negotiated a right-of-way agreement with Archibald Gardner that allowed the line to pass near Gardner's candy factory "over Jordan." Wilcken purchased the right-of-way as agent for the railroad and also became involved in negotiations for the purchase of railroad ties for the line. In 1894 his railroad interests included some exploring for the proposed Salt Lake and Los Angeles Railroad.<sup>27</sup>



*Wilford Woodruff.  
Charles H. Wilcken served as  
his companion and nurse.  
USHS collections.*

The final twenty-five years of Wilcken's life that have been discoverable show only gradual diminution of activity. He spent a great deal of time with Wilford Woodruff, generally as a companion and nurse. His relations with the several Cannon families also matured. He was one of those in charge of the remains of Wilford Woodruff and George Q. Cannon when those gentlemen died. He also served as a

<sup>27</sup>Nuttall, Journal, May 18, 28, 1892.

pallbearer during the funeral of Lot Smith. He was reappointed Salt Lake City watermaster in 1896 and also served as assistant superintendent of the Deseret Telegraph Company. On April 13, 1911, he was named a patriarch by Joseph F. Smith. He lived out his days as a guide on Temple Square and died in a Salt Lake hospital on April 9, 1915, at age eighty-four.<sup>28</sup>

The focus of this paper has been on Wilcken's public life, especially his many services to the LDS church and its leaders. Space does not permit an examination of his home and family life, his two failed marriages, his various employments, his career as an unsuccessful real estate speculator, or the nature and value of his published writings, of which there are several. Rather, the aim has been to fit Wilcken into the rich tapestry of Utah history. No church doctrine carries his name. He authored no legislative act. There are no schools, streets, or communities named for him. The only public notice of his presence on earth is his name on a plaque and a seat in Pioneer Memorial Theatre at the University of Utah. Why then pay so much attention to an obscure, barely known nineteenth-century Saint?

Wilcken and perhaps scores of men like him made it all work. While others whose names are much more familiar dealt with questions of God and man, law vs. religion, statehood vs. subservience, Wilcken went about the business of caring for his own families, assisting and protecting others as necessary, and simply doing what had to be done. He was not necessarily a great man, but he was a worker bee in Zion's hive. He may have saved some lives—especially in the incident that led to Marshal Burt's death—and he certainly shielded fellow and sister Saints from arrest and imprisonment. He improved the environment in which he lived, and he lived a lawful, respected, and undervalued life.

<sup>28</sup>Journal History, March 3, 1896; Woodruff, *Journal*, 9:531; Journal History, April 13, 1911; *Deseret Evening News*, April 10, 1915.



*The aesthetic Oscar Wilde was captured by theatrical photographer Napoleon Sarony in 1882 on arrival in the U.S. for his lecture tour.*

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## Oscar Wilde's Visit to Salt Lake City

BY HELEN L. WARNER

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Miss Warner lives in Salt Lake City.